U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Subject: **ACTION:** FAA Order 8260.3B, Paragraph 251; AVN- 1 Memorandum dated March 25

Date: OCT 7 2003

From: Director, Flight Standards Service, AFS-1

Reply to Attn. of:

To: Program Director, Aviation Systems Standards, AVN-1

Thank you for voicing your concerns regarding the policy contained in FAA Order 8260.3B, United States Standard for Terminal Instrument Procedures (TERPS), Volume 1, paragraph 251. The scope of the implementation of paragraph 251 is indeed substantial with impact to airports and aircraft operators. While this policy and its rationale are sound, there were aspects of its implementation that were not completed as expected.

The criteria contained in paragraph 251 were established in response to the agency effort to reduce controlled flight into terrain accidents on nonprecision approaches and implementation is mandatory. The evaluation not only offers visual segment protection to nonprecision approach procedures, it also yields an indication of the adequacy of a runway to support lateral navigation/vertical navigation, lateral precision performance with vertical guidance, and required navigation performance Barometric vertical navigation approach operations. Application of paragraph 251 is vital in bringing the Commercial Aviation Safety Team initiative of providing vertically guided approach procedures to all runways to fruition.

The following plan has been coordinated with Airports, the National Association of State Aviation Officials, and AVN-100. It is effective October 1, 2003.

1. Perform the paragraph 251 evaluations, as amended by terminal instrument procedures (TERPS) instruction letter (TIL) 03-047, on all original approach procedures when they are developed and each existing approach procedure when amended or during the periodic review.

2. Extensive obstruction surveys contribute greatly to the density of available obstacle data. However, a survey that is compliant with FAA No. 405, Standards For Aeronautical Surveys and Related Products, is not mandatory for this evaluation. Use all obstruction data on hand, including terrain and obstacle information from Digital Terrain Elevation Data (DTED), PHOTOSLOPE™, and other sources approved by Flight Standards, inclusive of average vegetation assumptions. Where survey data do not exist and only DTED is available, perform the evaluation using DTED and appropriate vegetation assumptions.

3. Where obstructions penetrate the 20:1 surface, notify the airport manager that the runway does not comply with obstacle clearance requirements for night instrument flight rules approaches. From the date of notification, the airport manager has 3 years* to bring the runway into compliance through one of the following options:

a. Marking and lighting the obstruction(s)
b. Reducing the obstacle(s) height to a level that no longer penetrates the 20:1 surface
c. Removing the obstacle(s)
d. Where options a, b, and c are not practical, a 20:1 surface penetration may be mitigated by employing a visual glide slope indicator (VGSI) aimed at or above 3°, as appropriate, to provide a clear VGSI obstacle surface.

*NOTE: *The 3 year time period allows the airport manager to petition Airports to fund and complete actions to address the surface penetrations.*

4. The airport manager, state aviation authority, or FAA Flight Standards District Office inspector may verify obstruction removal or reduction in height actions are completed.

5. If the penetrations are not eliminated or mitigated after 3 years, publish a note on the approach chart denying night minimums to the affected runways. If corrective actions are in progress but not completed, the airport manager may submit a letter to AFS-400 through the regional Flight Procedures Office to request an extension of the 3-year time limit.

We appreciate your partnership in completing the implementation of these criteria. If you have any questions, contact John McGraw, AFS-400, on (202) 385-4586

for John M. Allen
James J. Ballough